

Fact sheet 12

Epigraphic data

Characterising and visualising epigraphic data across an ancient quarry landscape and assessing meaning, in terms of understanding the social context of quarrying, can be problematic to unravel. ‘Epigraphic data’ is a collective term we have used to define any type of man-made inscribing of an ancient quarry landscape. Such inscribing can be as inscriptions, graffiti (this can include usually single characters and/or geometric of unrecognisable symbols, masons marks), rock art/petroglyphs (carvings on rocks of animals, humans, boats and symbols of often a religious nature and other pictorial, stylised and abstract art forms).

This range of epigraphic data and how it occurs across an ancient quarry landscape is extremely variable. In most instances, epigraphic data is usually inscribed onto a natural rock face. These may be cut into a worked quarry face, so placed there after quarrying. Or, epigraphic data may occur on unworked rock faces close to an extraction site in a quarry complex. Sometimes epigraphic data may be located in places across a quarry landscape distant from the extraction sites, this can often be along transport routes or at key places of embarkation from the quarries. Whether the epigraphic data are directly linked to the quarrying (made by the work force) or not (other use of the landscape) is a matter of interpretation in each case.



Hieroglyphic inscription by the transport route leading from Chephren's Quarry to the Nile, naming the “overseer” of the craftsmen.



New Kingdom marks on sandstone outcrops naming mr-Ra (beloved of Ra), Aswan West Bank, Egypt. This probably relates to the solar cult linked to the use of silicified sandstone.



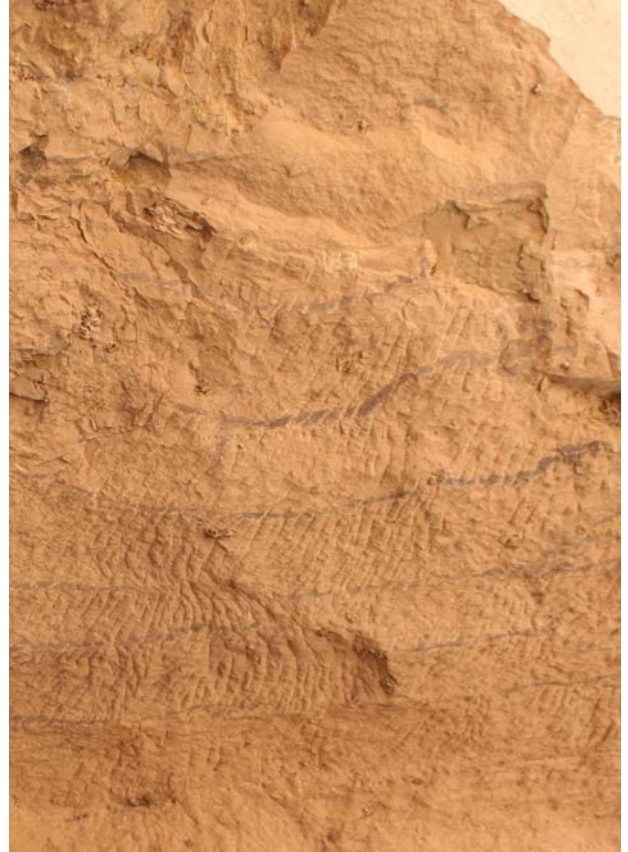
Graffiti and greek inscription on a quarry face at Gebel el Silsila sandstone quarry, Egypt. The graffiti reminds the shape of the Ptolemaic temples made by that stone.



Petroglyphs in a sandstone quarry, Aswan West Bank; connected to quarrying or not?



The famous Khufu Stela, as found by Rex Engelbach in 1933, Chephren's Quarry, Egypt.



Painted lines displaying progress of quarrying in sandstone quarry, Gebel el Silsila, Egypt